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President: Mr. Essy ..... (Côte d'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 40 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/49/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/636)

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is a great honour for me, on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, to thank His Excellency Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé of Senegal, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the other members of the Committee for their sincere efforts in discharging this noble task and in informing world public opinion on the question of Palestine and its developments.

Once again, the General Assembly is seized of the question of Palestine in all its aspects, this question being the core issue and the quintessence of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the question that represents the principal and most significant area and the focal point for the achievement of any progress in the Middle East peace process.

Significant and positive developments have taken place in the search for a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine in the context of the comprehensive peace process in the Middle East region, such as the agreement on the Declaration of Principles by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on 13 September 1993 in Washington; the signing of the autonomy agreements in Cairo on 14 May 1994; the recent Oslo agreement and the assumption by the Palestinian Authority of its responsibilities in Gaza and the Jericho area.

Despite these developments, however, we find the Israeli Government continuing to set conditions, and to create obstacles, in addition to its human rights violations against the Palestinians, such as curfews, confiscation of land, the demolition of houses, harassment and arrests.

These practices which have been confirmed by the international and even the Israeli media as well as the reports of organizations concerned with human rights contravene the norms of international humanitarian law as well as the terms of the agreements signed by the Israeli and Palestinian parties, and endanger the ongoing peace process which was based principally on the land-for-peace principle.

Israel's persistence in its settlement policy in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in Al-Quds, is a grave matter indeed that causes concern and threatens the peace process.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in its report, has voiced

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its concern at the continued Israeli policy of settlement and land confiscation and stressed the fact that during the transitional period Israel remains duty-bound, as the occupying power, under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, to respect the provisions of the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territories and other occupied Arab territories including Al-Quds.

The persistence by the Israeli Government in the policy of Judaizing the holy sites in the occupied territories, entrenching and expanding the settlement of those territories, attempting to carve up the Ibrahimi Mosque and allowing the extremist settlers to continue to be armed, regardless of all the resolutions of the United Nations and the norms of international law, together with its prevarication in implementing some of the principal clauses of the Declaration of Principle and subsequent agreements, its selectivity and its many pretexts to slow down implementation of the agreements contradict the provisions of those agreements, especially Article III of the Declaration of Principles which stipulates:

> "In order that the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip may govern themselves according to democratic principles, direct, free and general elections will be held — and will constitute a significant interim preparatory step toward the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements". *(A/48/486, annex, art. III)*

The Israeli Government has not honoured many of its commitments, such as the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners and detainees and the opening of corridors between Gaza and Jericho. This has led to the intensification of violence and disturbances in the self-governing and other areas. This, in turn, has increased the suffering of the Palestinian people that lives under difficult conditions both inside and outside the occupied territories.

The success of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process which we all welcomed most warmly is contingent on two fundamental factors: First, that the Israeli Government should fully honour the commitments it took upon itself in the agreements it has concluded with the Palestinians so that the Palestinian people may exercise its legitimate rights to freedom and self-determination and establish its independent state on its national soil; Second, that the international community should rise to its historic responsibilities by providing political, moral and financial support to the Palestinian Authority in order for it to rehabilitate the infrastructure of the Palestinian economy after so many years of occupation and enable the Palestinian people to cope with the requirements of the transitional period in the area of socio-economic development. Such support is essential for improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the short and long term and for consolidating the ongoing peace process in the region.

My delegation finds it important to expand and promote the United Nations role in the course of the transitional period the Palestinian people has to go through before it achieves self-determination, peace, security and stability.

My delegation also wishes to reiterate the belief that the United Nations bears an abiding responsibility towards the question of Palestine in all its aspects until such time as all the elements of its final settlement have been implemented. Those elements, which include the issues of Al-Quds, the settlements, security arrangements and borders, should be dealt with according to the resolutions of international legality.

My delegation wishes to reiterate the belief that the achievement of a peaceful, just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict should be founded on the land-for-peace principle and on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) which stipulate complete withdrawal by Israel from all the occupied territories including the Syrian Golan, Al-Quds and southern Lebanon and guarantee the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

In this context, Israel must honour all its commitments under the agreements concluded with the Palestinian party so that the Palestinian people may be able to exercise its legitimate rights, establish its independent state on its national soil and realize its aspirations after a life of freedom and dignity like all the peoples and nations of the world.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to reiterate the support of the Government and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the Palestinian people, who have been struggling for decades for the exercise of their inalienable rights.

The sacred land of Palestine and its holy centre of Al-Quds is still under occupation and the people of Palestine are continuously subjected to inhuman treatment by the occupying forces. Many documents, including the periodic reports of the Special Committee to Investigate

Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories in documents A/49/67, A/49/172 and A/49/511, the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in document A/49/13 and the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in document A/49/35 indicate that the Palestinians have during the last year continued to suffer from the worst living conditions under the brutality of the occupying forces.

These documents have provided ample descriptions of the systematic inhuman practices of the Zionist regime, including arbitrary mass arrests and detention of Palestinians, sealing or demolition of homes, frequent imposition of curfews, sealing or closing of areas of the occupied territories, prolonged school closing, confiscation of land, expansion of settlements and shooting of Palestinian people.

The report of the Special Committee in document A/49/511 indicates that practices by Israel in the field of land confiscation have intensified and the expansion of a certain number of settlements have gained momentum since September 1993. According to the report, 40 per cent of the territory in the Gaza Strip is still taken up by settlements, military installations and so-called security zones. The report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East also confirms the continuation of housing construction in Jewish settlements, particularly in Al-Quds, and moving more settlers to those settlements.

The report of the Special Committee states that, in several instances, there is convincing evidence that settlers are systematically armed and that their violent actions have caused the death of numerous Palestinians in the occupied territories. The most tragic example of these crimes was the massacre, on 25 February 1994, of Palestinian worshippers by a member of a Zionist terrorist group at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Al-Khalil. The innocent Palestinians, while fasting in the holiest month, were shot from behind during morning prayers and as a result, a large number of Moslem worshippers were martyred or injured.

The increasing number of killings and detentions and the ill-treatment of detainees are among the dimensions of the horrifying situation in the occupied territories. Since the beginning of the *intifadah*, several thousand Palestinians have been killed or injured by the Israeli forces. The report of the Special Committee (A/49/511) states that during the year under review,

> "numerous instances of random shooting by troops were reported, often with live ammunition and involving minors, and the operation of undercover units has continued." (*A/49/511, p. 5*)

The conditions of detention are another source of great concern. Torture and both physical and psychological ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners, especially during interrogations, have continued, and prisoners on several occasions have staged protests against shortages of water and the lack of fresh air in their cells.

The imposition of curfews, often round-the-clock, on Palestinians cities, towns, villages and refugee camps, and the repeated sealing off or closing of areas have seriously hindered the functioning of daily life of the Palestinian people and in many cases have prevented them from reaching their schools and jobs. According to the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, education services, which had been disrupted by the closure of the occupied territories in March 1993 suffered further from the increased restrictions on movement imposed by the Israeli forces following the massacre at Al-Khalil and its aftermath. Those restrictions hampered access by students and teachers alike to certain schools, and students lost two or more months of training. The report of the Special Committee also indicates that the tightening of existing restrictions on movement after the Al-Khalil massacre aggravated even further the already critical economic situation prevailing in the occupied territories. The occupying forces have also imposed more restrictions on the freedom of religion by closing the area where the Ibrahimi Mosque is located and recently by the partition of the Mosque — a measure which has been denounced by Muslims world wide.

In conclusion, I should like to underline the fact that the above-mentioned crimes are being committed at the very time when the Zionists claim to seek peace in the Middle East. In fact, the continuation of the occupation constitutes a grave violation of international law, and of the human rights of the Palestinians. In our view, the current process and recent agreements will not lead to the full restoration of the inalienable individual and national rights of the Palestinians people and cannot be the foundation of a just solution, which is the cornerstone of any lasting peace in the region. The comprehensive and just solution to the question of Palestine lies in the full realization of all the rights of the people of Palestine,

including the return of all Palestinian refugees to their homeland and the liberation of all occupied territories.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): Events in the Middle East during the past year, indeed the past few weeks, dramatically illustrate the current transition from a situation of violent conflict to one of uneasy peace; when news of breakthroughs towards a just and comprehensive settlement of the Palestine question simultaneously brings with it reports of the perpetration of acts which not only seem inconsistent with that objective, but are in fact purposely designed to derail the peace process. While more recent events may attract greater attention, one should not relegate into the background the gruesome killing of over 50 Palestinian worshippers at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron last February and the less often reported, though no less real, daily sufferings which continue to be inflicted on the Palestinian people in their occupied homeland. Indonesia is deeply saddened by the loss of innocent lives exacted by these actions and the ordeals of the people in the occupied territories.

Prince Sisowath (Cambodia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

While the past year has continued to be marred by violence, we must also acknowledge the tremendous strides which have been made towards ending the long suffering of the Palestinian people since the signing of the historic Declaration of Principles on Palestinian Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Despite initial difficulties and uncertainties, the Cairo Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Government of Israel, signed on 4 May 1994, has *inter alia* facilitated the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. We are particularly heartened by the deployment of Palestinian police and the transfer to them of internal security arrangements, which has had a positive impact on the overall situation in those areas. But we cannot fail to note that Israeli forces continue to remain in the areas of settlements, military installations and so-called security zones.

No account of the positive developments of the past year would be complete without reference to the triumphant and long-awaited return of President Yasser Arafat to the Gaza Strip and Jericho after nearly three decades in exile. His return to assume the leadership of the Palestinian Authority promises to herald a new chapter in its history. We note the determination with which the Palestinian Authority has endeavoured to carry out its tasks and responsibilities, and thereby create conditions conducive to the restoration of normalcy in the areas within the severe constraints under which it operates.

Indonesia has also noted the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibility signed between the PLO and Israel on 29 August 1994 from the Israeli military Government and its civil administration to the Palestinian Authority in the areas of health and social welfare, education and culture, tourism and taxation.

Notwithstanding the successes achieved so far, Indonesia is fully conscious of the immense challenges and difficulties that still abound. Denying the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem and of the Gaza Strip their freedom of movement to other areas of the occupied territories and to Israel, combined with the serious lack of economic opportunities for Palestinians, has created serious tensions that often erupt into violent conflict, especially in the border areas. Decades of Israeli occupation have destroyed the basic infrastructure of the occupied territories and, no less important, have disrupted the education of a whole generation of young Palestinians.

Despite all of this, however, there exists among the Palestinian people a wealth of talent, drive and creativity. These resources must be fully utilized. Indonesia firmly believes that the international community bears a solemn obligation to extend full assistance to the nascent Palestinian Authority in order to enable it to transform the occupied territories from an area of conflict and poverty into one of peace and prosperity.

In this context, we welcome the appointment earlier this year of the United Nations Special Coordinator to provide overall guidance and facilitate the effective coordination of international assistance to the Palestinian people in order to meet both their immediate and long-term needs. We also note the declaration issued by President Yasser Arafat and the Foreign Ministers of Norway and Israel at the end of their meeting in Oslo last September, which contains, *inter alia*, a number of agreed principles and needs that should guide the efforts of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in garnering much-needed international assistance for the Palestinian people.

Apart from the challenge of economic reconstruction, one difficulty, which my delegation regrets, is the continued pursuit by the Government of Israel of a number of untenable policies and practices, which, unless reversed, will obstruct further progress towards comprehensive peace. In this regard, we note

with serious concern the ongoing detention of Palestinian political prisoners inside Israel. We would also like to draw attention to continuing settlement activities by the Israeli Government, especially in and around the city of Jerusalem.

Furthermore, Israel must refrain from taking any steps that would demographically alter the status of the city of Jerusalem or prejudice future negotiations pertaining to its final status. Such untenable steps are inconsistent with the letter and spirit of the 1993 Declaration of Principles. Furthermore, it is imperative that Israel recognize the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention in the occupied territories, restore human rights, and rescind orders which have unduly restricted the political, economic, social and cultural activities of the Palestinian people for more than quarter of a century.

My delegation has consistently taken the position that the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people is an essential prerequisite for peace and security in the Middle East. As a consequence, the progress made over the past year in the talks between Israel and the PLO can be expected to have a profound impact in transforming the political and security environment in the Middle East. None the less, a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East also requires progress on the other tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations. We are gratified to note that significant progress in this direction was recently achieved with the signing of the Treaty of Peace between Jordan and Israel.

Indonesia hopes that the genuine, concerted efforts by Syria and Lebanon to open up possibilities for achieving progress towards peace will be reciprocated by the Government of Israel. In this connection, we would like to reaffirm that a durable settlement of the Middle East question must entail the complete withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, from the Syrian Golan and from southern Lebanon; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; the recognition and exercise of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination; and the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1975).

The United Nations was barely two years old when the question of Palestine was first included on its agenda for consideration. Today, as the United Nations stands on the eve of its fiftieth anniversary, the question of Palestine still awaits a just and comprehensive solution. Now, more than at any other time in its history, the States Members of the Organization are presented with a unique opportunity to facilitate the realization of that long-cherished aspiration: the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable right to self-determination and to a sovereign, independent State on their national soil. We must seize this opportunity.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Since the last session of the General Assembly, the Middle East peace process has witnessed new, major breakthroughs. After the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel in September last year, a Palestinian Authority was established recently to administer the self-rule areas. In July this year Jordan and Israel signed the Washington Declaration, which announced the end of the state of war. This was followed by the official signing of a peace treaty in October. Meanwhile, Israel's relations with other Arab countries are also improving. We welcome and express our appreciation for the positive results achieved in the Middle East peace process.

The Middle East question, with the question of Palestine at its core, has been a regional issue since the end of the Second World War. In order to seek an early and just peace settlement, the parties concerned, especially the countries and peoples of the region, have made protracted and unswerving efforts. The Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991 marked a new stage in the Middle East peace process. The positive results achieved thus far in the PLO-Israel and Jordan-Israel talks constitute an important step towards the full restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and the realization of overall and lasting peace and stability in the region.

However, there is still a long way to go before a final, comprehensive and fair settlement of the Middle East question, especially the question of Palestine, can be attained, and there might be difficulties and ups and downs in the negotiations. We hope that the parties concerned will continue to adopt a flexible and practical attitude, seize the current historic opportunity and make continued efforts for the early realization of peace in the entire region.

Over the years, the international community, the United Nations in particular, has made positive and important contributions to promoting the peaceful

settlement of the Palestinian question, as well as the entire Middle East question. At present, the full-scale reconstruction of the Palestinian self-rule areas has become a heavy and pressing task facing the Palestinian Government in the areas. It requires urgent support and assistance from the international community. The United Nations should continue to play an active role in mobilizing more international support for the successful implementation of the PLO-Israel agreement and in promoting a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question.

All along, the Chinese Government and people have closely followed the developments in the Middle East. Over the years, we have been deeply disturbed by the failure to restore the Palestinian people's legitimate rights and have sympathized with the peoples in the region for their misfortune and suffering caused by wars. It is our sincere hope that the war will be brought to an end at an early date, enabling the countries and peoples of the region to restore peace and embark on the road of rebuilding their homeland. We have always believed that the realization of peace is in line with the fundamental interests of all the peoples in the region.

It is our consistent position that political negotiation is the most effective way to resolve disputes between States. We have made unremitting efforts to this end. We believe that the establishment of peace in the Middle East should be based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We are sincerely pleased to see the progress that has already been made, and we ardently hope for further progress.

In the future China will, as always, work with other members of the international community in striving to promote the Middle East peace process. At the same time, China is ready to participate actively in the reconstruction of the Palestinian self-rule areas. Since the signing of the PLO-Israel agreement, the Chinese Government has provided the Palestinian side with two interest-free loans and a number of grants. China will continue to make efforts within its means to assist economic recovery in the Palestinian self-rule areas.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Since the convening of the Madrid conference in 1991, there have been significant and positive developments in the Middle East peace process. Those developments show that the parties concerned are interested in making progress in the search for peace. My Government welcomes those developments, which could have never taken place were it not for the resolve and determination of the region's peoples to move forward despite all the difficulties and obstacles in their path.

Following the signing of the peace agreement between Jordan and Israel, we cannot but voice the hope that the peace process in the Middle East will be consolidated through full implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements for Palestine and the achievement of progress on both the Syrian and the Lebanese tracks. The ultimate aim should be the achievement of a just and comprehensive settlement in accordance with resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978) and 194 (III) as well as all other relevant resolutions which set out basic principles that have to be respected. Those principles call for Israel's complete withdrawal from the Arab territories it has occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds, the Golan and southern Lebanon, in accordance with the land-for-peace principle, and for recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including, first and foremost, their right to self-determination, the right to the establishment of an independent State and the right of return for the refugees.

In this context, we are gratified by the partial withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza and Jericho, and we are also happy that Chairman Yasser Arafat has returned to his country and has begun to take charge of Palestinian affairs. We believe he deserves our full support in order for him to overcome the difficulties he has to cope with in the course of the sensitive transitional period. We also welcome the signing by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization of a set of bilateral agreements that cover the transfer of a number of responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority and provide for the strengthening of relations between the two parties. We hope these agreements will be fully implemented in good faith.

We believe there are urgent steps that need to be taken by Israel with the aim of building confidence with the Palestinian Authority, such as freeing the remaining Palestinian detainees, renouncing its settlement policy in the West Bank, including Al-Quds and desisting from all repressive acts such as the closing of borders, as such acts intensify tensions and exacerbate the economic plight of the Palestinian people.

The United Nations has a paramount role to play in the peace process. That role should continue until such time that a final and comprehensive settlement is reached and the Palestinian people is enabled to exercise all its

rights. In this context, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People bears a particularly significant responsibility towards the mobilization of public opinion and the deployment of efforts at the international level to ensure the success of the United Nations endeavours aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region. We seize this opportunity to express our appreciation for the role the Committee has performed and continues to perform, and to extend our thanks to the Committee and to its Chairman, Ambassador Cissé, for the very valuable support extended to the Palestinian people in its striving after its legitimate rights.

By the same token, we wish to commend the tremendous efforts of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on behalf of the Palestinian people. The Agency shoulders an indispensable responsibility, especially during the transitional period, towards the amelioration of the living conditions of the refugees and the enhancement of the ability of the Palestinian people to take charge of its own affairs after the transfer of responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority. Consequently, the Agency deserves every moral and financial support in order for it to continue to discharge its task.

We also commend the unremitting efforts of the Department of Public Information to increase awareness regarding the Palestinian cause and inform the world on the peace efforts in the region. These efforts should continue and adapt to current developments.

The worsening economic and social situation in Gaza is cause for grave concern. The Palestinian Authority must have sufficient financial resources in order for it to be able to shoulder its responsibilities towards its citizens. To that end, given the scarcity of resources and the lack of essential services in the region, the international community should intensify its economic assistance and financial support to initiate development projects aimed at improving the inhabitants' standards of living. We stress in this respect the need to honour the pledges and promises made by several donor countries in every stage of the peace process. Those promises should be kept, as the economic aspect of the situation is not less important than its political aspect if a just peace is to be achieved and any setback to the peace process is to be avoided.

We are happy to note the efforts deployed to organize international meetings and conferences of an economic and financial nature to provide assistance to the Palestinian people, such as the conference that took place in Washington, D.C. on 1 October 1993. We also welcome the efforts aimed at promoting regional developmental cooperation such as those we witnessed in the recent Casablanca Conference on the development of the Middle East and North Africa. In this context, we must underscore the fundamental role played by the specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations system which deserve every encouragement and support in order for them to continue to perform that active developmental role in the interest of the Palestinian people.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's decision to appoint a special coordinator of all forms of economic, social and other assistance provided by the United Nations to the Palestinian people. This appointment is bound to enhance the effectiveness of the efforts deployed towards that aim.

Tunisia has spared no effort in providing every possible assistance to the Palestine Liberation Organization which we hosted for 12 years. We have also participated actively in the multilateral negotiations, some of which we hosted, such as the fourth session of the Working Group on refugees and the meeting of the Steering Committee that took place in Tunisia last summer, as well as the meeting of the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security scheduled to convene in Tunisia in the second week of December 1994. Tunisia will spare no effort in providing any kind of assistance, particularly in the technical field, to the Palestinian people in order to help them cope with their development and reconstruction needs and regain their freedom, security and stability.

In our view, the Middle East peace process should be based on an all-embracing perspective that takes into account all the economic, political and social aspects which should be dealt with in a well-balanced harmonious manner, especially that the achievement of the comprehensive settlement we all aspire after still faces obstacles that have to be dealt with wisely and firmly. The international community must keep in mind that this is a very delicate stage in the process and do its utmost to ensure the success of the peace process.

Mr. Al-Ni'mah (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): May I at the outset convey my delegation's sincerest thanks to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to bring peace to the Middle East in general and to restore to the Palestinian people all their rights.

I also wish to convey my sincere appreciation to Ambassador Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, and to the members of the Committee for all their efforts in preparing this very comprehensive and informative report, which will help to keep the cause of the Palestinian people alive until such time as God grants final victory. At this highly sensitive juncture, we are all duty-bound to assist the Palestinian people in their transition to self-government and to keep their hope and optimism alive. They must regain all their national rights, including their legitimate right to exercise self-determination and to build their own independent State on their Palestinian soil.

Since the General Assembly discussed the Palestinian question at the last session, there have been developments that give cause for optimism. But this optimism is tempered with caution because of some painful events that befell the Palestinians and overshadowed their nascent optimism. I believe that it is right to state that the most important development that gives rise to hope is that the Palestinian Authority has now assumed the responsibilities of self-government in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, and that negotiations are continuing between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel to extend self-government to the rest of the West Bank and to transfer responsibility for health, education and other areas of social and economic development to the Palestinian Authority so that the Palestinians themselves may begin to rebuild and develop their own homeland.

Needless to say, acts of violence aimed at undermining the peace process have made Israel slow down implementation of its commitments under the Declaration of Principles and the Cairo Agreement.

Also, delaying the provision of the required assistance which is expected from the international community for rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of Palestinian economy, especially in Gaza, will impede the desired progress in the area of Palestinian reconstruction and economic rehabilitation.

It is no secret to any fair-minded observer that Israel's occupation, which weighs heavily on the Palestinian people, with its fragmentation of the territory, displacement of the populace and attempted effacement of the Palestinian national identity by arbitrary measures that run counter to all international conventions and to United Nations resolutions, has impacted strongly and negatively indeed on every aspect of Palestinian life.

My delegation fully appreciates the efforts the United Nations has deployed and continues to deploy towards the cause of the Palestinian people. It is to the credit of the United Nations that it made the question of Palestine a fixed item on the agenda of its General Assembly, which it continued to discuss at session after session, since the Organization came into being. Thanks are also due to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which made informing the world with regard to the cause of the Palestinian people its highest priority and instituted the practice of celebrating an annual Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. None of this has been the privilege of any other people championed by the United Nations. By according such attention to the cause of the Palestinian people, the United Nations has demonstrated the particularity and justness of that cause, as evidenced by the special information programme on the Palestinian question undertaken by the Department of Public Information; a programme that has increased awareness of the international community of the intricacies of the Palestinian question and the Middle East situation.

One home truth must be emphasized here, namely that the Declaration of Principles is the result of the long struggle of the Palestinian people and of the long-standing Arab support and international solidarity. These were the factors that elicited a measure of response from Israel to the approaches made. However, there is a need for Israel to understand fully the requirements of this sensitive stage which make it necessary to remove obstacles and to desist from trying to opt out of the commitments it took upon itself when it signed the Declaration of Principles. The acts of violence that Israel deals with arbitrarily are yet another factor that complicates further a deteriorating situation in the Palestinian territory. In addition, there is Israel's persistence in expanding its settlement operations in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Al-Quds, something that causes grave concern and poses a threat to the peace process as a whole.

There can be no doubt that the present deterioration of the situation in the Gaza Strip is due mainly to the frustration felt by its inhabitants after the surge of hope that things are going to get better with regard to their living conditions. We hope that realization of this fact will cause the international community to boost its assistance to the Palestinian Authority in order to help that Authority rebuild the necessary infrastructures to promote economic and social development in the occupied territories and tangibly to improve the standard of living of the Palestinian people, particularly in the

Gaza Strip, where a large number of the inhabitants find themselves in very dire economic conditions indeed.

The task of building the Palestinian state and laying the foundations of its national institutions requires a concerted international effort and a great deal of support and assistance. We hope that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), along with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), agencies that have long been active in the occupied territories, will now undertake the implementation of the projects recommended by the Working Group that was established by the Secretary-General after the signing of the Declaration of Principles to explore the feasibility of various projects and activities.

In order for us to achieve all that, we call upon the factions of the Palestinian people to safeguard their national unity and the achievements they have made. We also appeal to the Government of Israel to demonstrate a genuine desire for peace and adhere to the peace process by honouring its commitments under the Declaration of Principles, the Cairo Agreement and all subsequent agreements, especially those relating to the redeployment of Israeli forces in the occupied territories, without delay and the holding of free elections in Gaza and the West Bank so that the national institutions which will be the nucleus of the independent Palestinian State may be established. Israel must also halt the building of settlements and continue to negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization in good faith to resolve all pending issues. Israel should lift the seige it has laid to Gaza and the West Bank, as such seige punishes a whole people for a crime that has not been committed; by all that people that has suffered heavily enough as evidenced by what took place at the Ibrahimi mosque.

My delegation wishes to pay tribute today to the Organization and to express its solidarity with the Palestinian people, a solidarity for which the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has mobilized all its efforts.

We should like to thank the Committee for these efforts, which have mobilized the solidarity of all the peoples of the United Nations into a tidal wave of support for the Palestinians, a peace- and justice-loving people that has suffered for far too long and whose only ambition is to build its own independent State like all other Members of this Organization.

My delegation would like to take the opportunity of this international occasion to reiterate in this international forum the support of the Government and people of Qatar for the Palestinian people and of its right to build its own independent State and to develop the capabilities that will contribute to the progress of the Arab world and the prosperity of the Middle East.

Once again, we express our support for this Organization, and our support for all its efforts to uphold and strengthen the inalienable rights of the Palestinians and to mitigate the suffering of a people that has been struggling inside and outside its homeland. The Palestinian people deserve the support of all peace- and justice-loving peoples, all peoples who aspire to the realization of a world order based on justice and equity.

Proceeding from this, the State of Qatar reaffirms its continued support to the efforts aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Such support stems from our adherence to the behests of international legality, our constant support for right and justice and our sincere wish to extend every support and assistance to the Palestinian Authority with a view to enabling the Palestinian people to fully recover all its national and historic rights, including its legitimate right to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital and its right to the ingathering of its dispersed children through the return of all refugees to their homeland in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

I do not think that it is an exaggeration to say that the success of the entire peace process in the Middle East will depend on the success of the Palestinian Authority in making the self-government experiment a concrete reality on the ground. It is no exaggeration to say that what is at stake here is the success in achieving peace, not only for the Palestinians but also for the Middle East as a whole. The question of Palestine is the quintessence of the Arab-Israeli conflict, a fact that places a very particular responsibility on Israel, the international community — in particular, the two co-sponsors of the peace process and the United Nations with its specialized agencies. Israel should honour all its commitments under the Declaration of Principles, the Cairo Agreement and all subsequent agreements. The two co-sponsors, and in particular the United States, should press on with their good offices to carry the peace process in Palestine to a successful conclusion. The United Nations has to continue to work for the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to

the establishment of its independent State with Al-Quds as its capital.

The delegation of the State of Qatar wishes to reaffirm that the desired just and lasting peace in the Middle East can not be achieved except through the land-for-peace principle which should be implemented on a basis of international legality as embodied in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which stipulate complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, south Lebanon and Al-Quds. It is only thus that we can hope to achieve what we aspire after, namely a comprehensive and just peace throughout the Middle East, a region which thirsts for stability, security, prosperity and development after so much suffering and decades of conflict.

Mr. Razali (Malaysia): For 49 years the question of Palestine has featured prominently on the United Nations agenda. Today we continue the debate, taking stock of developments — especially the peace process — following the historic signing of the Declaration of Principles between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on 13 September last year. The Declaration was followed in May this year by the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area.

In its statement during the debate on this subject at the forty-eighth session the Malaysian delegation acknowledged and commended

> "The courage of Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin in assuming the leadership to bring about the forging of such a historic decision ...". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, 65th meeting, p. 17)*

The latest developments must be used to secure progress in the long search for a comprehensive, just and durable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, of which the question of Palestine remains the core.

The peace process in which the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships are involved must put into structure the mutual confidence that would ultimately facilitate the solution of the Palestinian issue. The people and Government of Malaysia are convinced that a final solution must provide for the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and to a homeland, and for the security of all States, including Israel. The final solution must be consistent with relevant United Nations resolutions — in particular, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

We recognize that there have been some positive developments, but the situation on the ground remains far from satisfactory. My delegation is deeply disturbed by the following observation quoted in the Secretary-General's report:

> "There have been delays in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and there has also been some lack of compliance with the provisions of the agreement reached". *(A/49/636, para. 4)*

Any deliberate attempt to obstruct the implementation of the peace accord within the agreed time-frame would certainly be undesirable and would be detrimental to the peace process itself. Following years of difficult and protracted negotiations, the United Nations cannot tolerate any retrograde step and must insist that all aspects of the accord be kept intact and adhered to by all parties.

If the peace process is to be sustained, the Palestinian leadership, under Arafat, must be assisted and strengthened to ensure full and timely compliance with and implementation of all the provisions of the Declaration of Principles and the Agreement. Any delay could have repercussions for the leadership that is critical to progress in the peace process. No extremism from any side can be allowed to wreck that process or to undermine leadership.

The delegation of Palestine in its statement on agenda item 37 (b) at the 68th plenary meeting, on Friday last week, emphasized that

> "... peace ... can be strengthened and secured only when the people of the region begin to feel tangibly that their daily lives have changed for the better". (Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings, 68th meeting, p. 4)

Basic amenities, such as water and electricity, food and shelter, and health and education have to be adequately addressed. There is also an urgent need for the creation of employment opportunities. In this regard, my delegation concurs with the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization that

> "... it will be essential to promote economic and social development in the occupied territories and to bring about, as quickly as possible, tangible improvements in Palestinian living conditions, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where needs are greatest." *(A/49/1, para. 581)*

Both those statements reflect an unwavering truth, which, if it is not acknowledged, will be the end of the peace accord.

My delegation recognizes that both bilateral and multilateral assistance for the development and reconstruction of Gaza and the Jericho Strip is of crucial importance for Palestinian self-rule and subsequent progress in the peace process. It is equally important that Israel not impose hardship on the Palestinians by sealing the border, thereby preventing them from earning a living. The various choke-points against the Palestinian administration and the well-being of the Palestinian people must be removed if genuine peace is to take root.

The international community, including Israel, must help to bring about a situation which would facilitate the full expression of the freedoms of the Palestinian people, who have long been disenfranchised in their diaspora. We must recognize that we are collectively involved in the process of transition towards the birth of a nation. We cannot delude ourselves: peace will neither prevail nor last without a Palestinian homeland.

The role of the United Nations in the field of development and reconstruction in the occupied territories is equally vital to support the implementation of the peace accord and to promote peace in the region as a whole. In this regard my delegation notes from the Secretary-General's report that the United Nations has significantly enlarged its programmes of economic, social and other assistance to the occupied territories.

While welcoming the various programmes and activities carried out by the international community in the occupied territories, my delegation is dismayed to learn of the most serious and severe impediment to development: the lack of adequate funding. Out of a total of $670 million pledged for 1994, less than 25 per cent has been made good so far. Clearly the donors have to be more forthcoming in providing adequate and timely financial resources.

The Government of Malaysia will continue to render whatever assistance is within its means to help the Palestinians in their quest for self-determination and in meeting their aspiration to establish their own independent State. That is consistent with our unequivocal support for the struggle of the Palestinian people. We have always maintained that until these objectives are met the United Nations has a permanent responsibility towards the Palestinian people.

For its part, Malaysia has made a modest contribution of $5 million to the national Palestinian Authority to assist in its efforts at reconstruction and development in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Malaysia is also offering relevant courses under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme to Palestinians. One of our education officers is now on secondment with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to assist in the setting up of a Palestinian educational system.

Yesterday was a special day as the United Nations observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. That important occasion should serve as a reminder to the international community of its responsibility towards the Palestinian people. Let us express our solidarity with the Palestinian people and leadership by renewing our commitments to provide the necessary support to them in their efforts to rebuild their own land and society.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The United Nations has made a practice of devoting the 29th of November, every year, to the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People's just cause which has been on the agenda of the United Nations for about five decades.

This is a cause that relates to the destiny of a people which has suffered the greatest injustice and persecution known in modern history. It relates also to the stability of a very sensitive region of the world which has been ravaged by numerous wars, occupations, tragedies and acts of aggression.

The United Nations has adopted several resolutions on the question of Palestine which, if implemented, would have contributed to lifting the injustice that has befallen the Palestinian people and to building peace and stability in the whole Middle East region.

On this occasion, the Syrian Foreign Minister addressed a message yesterday morning to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable

Rights of the Palestinian People, in which he reiterated Syria's unwavering support for the brotherly people of Palestine its just struggle to regain its legitimate national rights, especially its right to self-determination, like all other peoples of the world.

Syria's message of solidarity reiterated that Syria, whose history has been linked with the Palestinian cause and the defence of the rights of the Palestinian people, remains faithful to its principles and will continue to work towards establishing a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the land-for-peace principle, in a manner that ensures Israel's withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories and guarantees to the Palestinian people the exercise of its legitimate national rights, because genuine peace cannot be built on occupation of territories or on the negation of rights.

The report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, gives a very bleak picture of the unchanged situation of the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. The report points out that the main cause of tension and instability in the occupied territories is the continuing presence of Israeli settlements, a matter that poses a threat to peace and security in the region.

The report also refers to the policy of confiscation of lands, which, according to many reports, has been greatly intensified since the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO. The report shows that the aggressive, violent behaviour of the settlers, who have been systematically armed, has become the main source of tension in the region.

The most telling example of the violence perpetrated by the settlers was the massacre of Palestinian worshippers in the Ibrahimi Mosque on 25 February 1994. The report also points out that disturbances have been handled by harsh repressive measures against civilians and that the occupying forces continue to pursue the policy of collective punishment such as curfews, and closures for long periods of time, measures which have adversely affected the already unstable economic and social situation in the region. The report pointed out that torture and maltreatment continue to be practiced during interrogations in Israeli holding centres. It also pointed out that if no clear progress is made on the enjoyment by all the residents of the occupied territories of their human rights, there is a real danger that desperation and frustration will replace support for the peace process, with all the consequences that this may entail.

Israel's insistence on holding on to Al-Quds as its eternal capital does not change the fact that Al-Quds is part and parcel of the Arab territories which Israel occupied by 1967 and that all the resolutions of international legality apply to Al-Quds.

The Israeli authorities of occupation have recently taken specific measures to divide the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron in the occupied Palestinian territories under the pretext of security arrangements. The truth of the matter is that these measures aim at creating by force a new illegal situation that would give Israel rights over the Ibrahimi Mosque and legitimize the presence of settlers in the city of Hebron. The Arab group has stated its position clearly with regard to those Israeli measures in a message circulated on behalf of the Group of Arab States on 16 October 1994 (A/49/672). Israel's efforts in the context of the peace process have focused on trying to use the peace process to achieve partial settlements whereas such partial settlements have now been shown to be useless as a basis for genuine and viable peace.

Three years after the launching of the process in the Madrid Conference, Israel has been able to single out some Arab parties, and strike separate deals with them. The outward appearance of those deals may have looked like peace, but in actual fact they entrench occupation. Everyone knows that these deals have fallen far short of the aspirations and hopes of the Arabs and have put paid to the concept of comprehensive settlement. The optimism Israel propagates over what is supposed to be major progress in the peace process, is completely false, except from Israel's own view because the agreements that have been concluded so far serve only Israel's interests. It is only natural that Israel should engage in a massive campaign to deceive world public opinion, and give the illusion that the conflict in the Middle East is over and that peace has returned to the region.

The problem with the partial agreements which Israel is seeking to conclude through the singling out of each party individually is that they not only keep the occupation in place but lead also to complicating further the situation in the region and thereby perpetuate the causes of conflict and keep its embers alive. This not only contradicts the very basics of peace but also subverts the objectives for which the peace process was launched and in pursuit of which that process continues. Foremost among those objectives is ending Israel's occupation in

implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

All those who have a serious interest in the success of the peace process are well aware of the fact that those Arab parties that have opted for partial solutions and interim settlements, have weakened their own positions and have caused a serious crack in the Arab negotiating front which used to be based on coordination, consultation and adherence to agreed principles and objectives with the aim of achieving the desired peace and a just and comprehensive settlement to the problem.

Any agreement reached through individual settlements will never rise to the level of comprehensiveness and justice embodied in the resolutions of international legality. Therefore, any individual solution achieved will mean nothing but forsaking international legality, all the resolutions of the United Nations and all the principles upon which the present peace process was founded. In addition, individual settlements will preclude any possibility that the Arab parties may obtain international guarantees that any agreement with Israel will be implemented.

Separate solutions can never be conducive to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace because peace cannot exist in one part of the region while other parts continue to languish under Israeli occupation and no Arab party will be able to enjoy peace while large sectors of the Arab nation still suffer Israeli repression.

It is really strange that those who raced to bring about a Pax Israeliana still talk of such things as a unified Arab position, coordination, unity and understanding, thus raising slogans that have been made obsolete because they were not based on any true belief. If those parties had stuck to Arab coordination yesterday, today we would not have differences between any two Arab parties on claiming what is still in Israel's grasp. Syria, in seeking a just and comprehensive peace wants to do that in the open, in accordance with the principles upon which the Madrid Conference was convened, and will never bargain away any legitimate Arab right, nor will it be forced to work in secret or to hide the facts from its people.

Therefore, we must reiterate that the solution Syria wants should be a genuine comprehensive one that will restore the land to its owners and preserve Arab dignity. As for the partial separate settlements Israel is trying to bring about, they are and will continue to be rejected by us as we have no intention of considering such solutions, for they are no more than an attempt on the part of Israel to circumvent the resolutions of international legality as well as the land-for-peace principle and a manoeuvre to undermine the formula of the United States initiative upon which the peace process was founded.

Syria has discharged fully its duty towards the peace process. Syria is ready for a just, comprehensive peace today and tomorrow, as it was yesterday. It remains for Israel to carry out its own part. It also remains for the United States, as sponsor of the peace process, to shoulder its responsibilities towards its own initiative. If the United States is unwilling to take decisions for the parties concerned, the United States must at least take a stance that supports its own initiative and the ground rules on which all parties agreed.

More than once, President Clinton has stressed, as he did in his statement at Damascus, the need for a comprehensive peace in the region in accordance with the resolutions of international legality and the land-for-peace principle. That puts the onus on the Clinton Administration to move Israel towards responding to the requirements of peace and of the resolutions of international legality, in consonance with the United States initiative.

Peace is peace: there is no room for differing interpretations of what peace is, so long as it has been defined clearly and accurately in the United Nations resolutions and in the commitments of the United States Administration. We understand comprehensive peace in terms of the lines that existed on 4 June 1967. Those lines encompass all the occupied Arab territories, including southern Lebanon and the Golan.

Complete withdrawal will be followed by the peace dividends — and by the requirements of peace. When the Israeli authorities refuse to accept this principle and make numerous demands before withdrawal, in the knowledge that no one in Syria can accept such demands, they are deliberately putting the cart before the horse. By so doing, they have stalled the cart of peace and frozen the peace process and its talks. They alone are responsible for this complete freeze in the peace process and for delaying the multilateral negotiations in Washington. As for Syria, we have always been, and continue to be in favour of moving forward the peace process, and we shall continue to cooperate with any effort in that direction that is consonant with the principles agreed upon in the peace initiative and in the relevant resolutions of international legality. Syria has no preconditions with respect to the peace process, save that it be a means to

bring about peace with honour. It has no preconditions as far as peace is concerned, save that it be based on restoring Arab land and Arab rights in full.

All the facts on the ground prove that Israel remains at a far remove from the essence of the peace process. Starting with the Madrid conference, it has made it its business to restrict the peace negotiations to secondary and procedural matters. This has led to stalling the process and to freezing it in its place, as it is today. If Israel were as serious about building peace as it claims to be, it would have declared, from the very first round of negotiations in Washington, its commitment and readiness to withdraw from the Golan, from southern Lebanon and from all the other occupied Arab territories, and it would have responded to all the requirements of peace.

In every round of the Washington negotiations, and in every diplomatic effort by any United States or international envoy, the ball has remained squarely in Israel's court, as it is now. If the stalemate in the peace process is to be broken, Israel must stop pretending that it is the others and especially Syria, that are responsible for stalling the process. Israel must also renounce its illusions and desist from its intransigent and obstructive tactics, for the road to a just, comprehensive and durable peace is to be found only in ending occupation. That is what Israel should do first and above everything else.

Syria has given hundreds of thousands of victims and martyrs, not because it loves war or because combat is a hobby of ours but in defence of our rights, our dignity and our territory. That is why Syria now looks forward to moving the region out of the state of war into a state of peace, provided that rights are restored to all those who are entitled to them, an end is put to occupation and bloodshed, and human dignity is preserved. Such a peace in the region would enable Arabs and Israelis alike to live together in security, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish first of all to thank the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their respective reports, which contain useful information on recent developments in the Palestinian question and on future prospects for that question which has been closely bound with the history of the United Nations since its inception.

Algeria has welcomed the mutual recognition by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel and the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, in the understanding that this constituted a first step towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and with other United Nations resolutions.

While we welcome the progress that has followed the signing in Cairo on 4 May 1994 of the PLO-Israel agreement, we feel none the less that the situation on the ground gives reason for grave concern.

It is known that there has been much delay in implementing the agreements, that settlements continue to be built in the occupied Arab territories particularly around Al-Quds and that there have been continuous acts of violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers.

The measures adopted by the occupying authorities from time to time such as the closure of the West Bank and Gaza for indefinite periods and thereby depriving tens of thousands of Palestinian workers of the means of earning a living place the Palestinian Authority in a precarious position at a time when the economic and social suffering of the Palestinian people worsens.

The economic hardship resulting from 27 years of occupation continues, policies of repression are still in place and the forcible confiscation of Palestinian lands for the building of new settlements continues unabated. As to the promises to improve conditions of living in the occupied territories, such undertakings now come face to face with the prevarication of the parties and States that promised to provide assistance to the Palestinian people once the Declaration of Principles was signed. Failure by those parties to keep their promises has impacted negatively on the political and psychological climate and has had a deleterious effect on Palestinian efforts to achieve the objectives of the transitional period.

It is self-evident that if we wish the Declaration of Principles and the subsequent agreements between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel to succeed socio-economic development in the Palestinian territories must be bolstered.

In this regard, the international community is now called upon more urgently than in the past to intensify its support and assistance to the Palestinian Authority in Gaza.

Here we wish to pay tribute to the efforts of the specialized agencies and United Nations bodies in providing economic and technical assistance to the Palestinian people.

I should like also to mention here the steps taken by the Secretary-General Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali and, in particular, his appointment of a Special Coordinator in the occupied territories to coordinate the work of all the agencies of the United Nations organizations that are active in the field.

We reaffirm the abiding responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine until such time as the question is resolved in all its aspects, as the Organization is the most appropriate body to serve as guarantor of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East region. We hold that the United Nations must play a key role in building peace in the Middle East region and wish to reaffirm also the continued need for its participation in the peace process and in supporting the national Palestinian Authority.

Although resolution of the issues relating to Al-Quds, the settlements, the right of return and the question sovereignty have been deferred to a later date and will be addressed in the permanent status negotiations, we believe that the importance of these issues and the international community's posture regarding them should be clearly and specifically spelled out by the United Nations at this session of the Assembly. They are pressing matters. Also the question of the holy sites in Al-Quds and Hebron in particular deserve particular attention by the international community in view of the significance and the extremely sensitive nature of the issues involved.

The Declaration of Principles signed in Washington on 13 September 1993, the Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel of 26 October 1994 constitute a major turning point in the Middle East. While these two agreements bespoke the desire to implement the stipulations of the resolutions of international legality, we believe it is essential to make decisive progress on the Syrian-Israeli and the Lebanese-Israeli tracks in the very near future.

We wish to reaffirm here Algeria's support of Syria's legitimate claim and its right to recover the entire Golan on the basis of the peace process and the resolutions of international legality. We also voice the same support to the efforts of the Lebanese Government to extend its sovereignty over the whole of the Lebanese territory in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978) which calls for Israel's complete withdrawal from all the occupied Lebanese territories to the internationally recognized borders.

The region of the Middle East has endured tremendous suffering and its human and material resources have been bleeding for far too long. It is now high time the region enjoyed peace and stability and channelled its resources to the achievement of comprehensive development in the context of a comprehensive and just peace which, in turn, must be built on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) that are founded on the land-for-peace principle. We are fully convinced that progress, prosperity and economic and social well-being in the region can be achieved through the consolidation of confidence-building measures which would lead ultimately to the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction from the region while at the same time restoring full legitimate rights and sovereignty over its soil, including Al-Quds, to the Palestinian people.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): The delegation of Ukraine notes with satisfaction the progress achieved recently within the framework of the Middle East settlement that gives hope for establishing lasting peace and stability in the region after decades of hostility and wars.

Ukraine has always attached paramount significance to international efforts aimed at a just and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It has stood for the implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with universally recognized norms and principles of international law.

With its statements, Ukraine has, in every way, welcomed the signing of the Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles in September 1993, as well as the signing of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area in Cairo in May 1994. These agreements have reduced tension in the region and have opened the way towards the creation of Palestinian autonomy, demonstrating the correctness of the course chosen by the parties. The progress in negotiations between Israel and Jordan which culminated in the conclusion of the Washington Declaration and the signing of the Peace Treaty between the two countries was another step towards a comprehensive Middle East settlement. Ukraine expressed its support of this step by the relevant statement of its Foreign Ministry. We consider it

important that the other parties concerned, especially Syria and Lebanon, should be involved in further negotiations in the framework of the peace process.

Mr. Mwaungulu (Malawi), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The latest peace-making initiatives, as well as the documents signed, have yet to be implemented. Peace in the Middle East is closer than ever before in spite of all the obstacles created by those advocating extremism and destabilizing the situation. Ukraine condemns any manifestations of political extremism and terrorism, and calls on all the parties concerned to show restraint and a readiness to compromise, and to refrain from any action that would undermine the ongoing dialogue. This is absolutely essential for increasing trust and cooperation.

Ukraine is interested in peace in the Middle East and in the development of good-neighbourly, equal relations with all countries of the region and is ready to promote, in every possible way, the further development of the peace process, as well as a speedy solution to all issues in the Middle East conflict. We also stand for a political settlement of not only the Arab-Israeli conflict, but also of those among the Arab countries as well.

Worthy of note is the initiative of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel to hold a conference on security and cooperation in the Middle East and to transform it into a permanent body for arms control, for banning acts of aggression and for cooperation in the economic and social fields. The Casablanca Summit on economic issues of the Middle East and north Africa, and the Declaration that was signed, have demonstrated that the countries of the region are willing to cooperate in establishing comprehensive peace, generating sustainable economic growth and improving the living conditions of the population.

We commend the readiness of the Secretary-General, as expressed in his report A/49/636, to

> "make every effort to ensure that the United Nations system contributes its utmost in the fields of economic and social development, which will be essential in building peace throughout the region". *(A/49/636, para. 8)*

Ukraine believes that the United Nations, given the great experience it has acquired in that area over nearly five decades, should be prepared to undertake any role that would be helpful to the parties in advancing the peace process.

Let us not forget that the Organization and its organs have a permanent responsibility concerning the central issue of the conflict, the question of Palestine, until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is reached.

In this regard, we feel it necessary to recall the important contribution the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People continues to make as a forum for dialogue, analysis, exchange of experience, the mobilization of public opinion and action in support of the peace efforts and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as well as their socio-economic development.

As a member of the Committee, Ukraine will spare no effort to ensure that it achieves maximum effectiveness in the implementation of its mandate and further adjusts its work programme in the light of developments, in order to contribute, to the extent possible, to the realization of the common United Nations objective of achieving a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine.

Yesterday we commemorated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which demonstrated once again the support of the international community for their legitimate aspirations.

In this regard, allow me to conclude my statement by quoting from the Message of the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Mr. Gennadi Udovenko, on that occasion:

> "The year of 1994 will undoubtedly go down in the history of the Palestinian people as one of remarkable new progress on the way towards comprehensive, fair and lasting peace in the Middle East."

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) *(interpretation from French)*: On 29 November 1947, the General Assembly, at its second session, adopted resolution 181 (II), in which it approved the partition plan that provided for the end of the Mandate, the progressive withdrawal of British armed forces and the creation of the Arab and Jewish States scheduled for 1 October 1948 at the latest.

On 14 May 1948 the United Kingdom withdrew its forces and thus terminated the Mandate. On that day, the State of Israel was created on the territory allocated to it pursuant to the partition plan. After the founding of the State of Israel, hostilities broke out between the Arab and Jewish communities, and there were acts of violence.

Even more regrettably, we witnessed a succession of bloody wars between Israel and its Arab neighbours, which made the situation in the region unstable and precarious.

In 1964 the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded. By its resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974, the General Assembly solemnly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination, to independence and to national sovereignty. During that same year, the PLO was invited by the General Assembly to participate in its work as an Observer and as the representative of the Palestinian people.

These are the major events in one of the most protracted conflicts the world has known: the question of Palestine. The parties to the conflict did not recognize one another and held virtually no contacts. In a situation of constant tension each party, while turning its back on the proposals of its partners, constantly advocated its own approach and pressed for its own course of action as being the one in their view most likely to bring about a solution to the problem. Despite the countless efforts of the international community, the situation worsened further and, regrettably, nothing indicated that an overall political solution was in sight.

A new chapter in this history then began towards the middle of 1993, when talks took place in Oslo, Norway, under the leadership of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the late Johan Joergen Holst, between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). These talks, which the world had been calling for, happily resulted in the conclusion of an agreement known as the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. In agreeing to mutual recognition, Israel and the PLO on 13 September 1993 signed that historic agreement in Washington.

Pursuant to the agreement, the Palestinian Authority was recently set up in Gaza and in the Jericho area. Notwithstanding the financial and other difficulties encountered, the Palestinian Authority seems determined to press forward with the implementation of the agreement. The Jewish State has also opted for a positive attitude. Thus, the peace process still has a chance of succeeding.

Consistent with its policy of peace, friendship and cooperation with all countries of the world regardless of their socio-political regimes, the Lao People's Democratic Republic warmly welcomes the positive developments that have taken place in that region. It hopes that these developments will help the parties to the conflict to continue their negotiations in good faith with a view to achieving an overall settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), relating to the withdrawal of Israel from the territories occupied since 1967 and the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, and in particular the right to self-determination. We welcome this major step forward, which marks a crucial turning point in the quest for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the Israeli-Arab conflict.

However, in view of the repeated acts of violence that we have been witnessing, it would seem that much remains to be done before peace is established. The international community should therefore redouble its efforts and lend a very supportive hand to the noble endeavours to promote the peace process. For their part, the Lao Government and people take this opportunity to reaffirm their active solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle, under the leadership of the PLO, to recover their inalienable national rights. We will do all that we can to make a contribution — albeit a modest one — to the quest for peace in the region at this important transitional stage.

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam): I am very pleased to speak before the General Assembly on agenda item 40, "Question of Palestine". Members may recall that at the last session of the General Assembly, the international community warmly welcomed the signing by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Since then, we have witnessed further developments in the Middle East peace process, which began in Madrid in October 1991.

For many decades, the people and the Government of Viet Nam have been following very closely and with great interest the evolution of the situation in the Middle East. Like the rest of the international community, we welcomed the signing by Israel and the PLO of a series of important bilateral agreements in implementation of the Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993. The

Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the PLO, Representing the Palestinian People, laid the groundwork for strengthening the economic base of the Palestinian people and for enabling it to exercise its right of economic decision-making in accordance with its own development plan and priorities. The Protocol was subsequently incorporated into the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area of 4 May 1994. The Agreement sets forth a number of arrangements regarding the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area. These include the scheduled withdrawal of Israeli military forces, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the transfer to it of various areas of authority.

We were very pleased to see the return of President Yasser Arafat to the Gaza Strip to assume the leadership of the Palestinian Authority.

Another event of significance was the signing, on 29 August 1994, by Israel and the PLO of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities regarding the West Bank.

While welcoming these positive developments, we earnestly hope that these agreements will be fully and effectively implemented. The situation on the ground shows that numerous difficulties and obstacles still remain. This is only the beginning — albeit an important one — of a difficult and complicated transition period. All concerned parties, therefore, should continue to strengthen their efforts.

We are very concerned at the acts of violence that continue to inflict death and suffering upon the Palestinian people. Moreover, violations of the human rights of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples in the occupied areas are of great concern to the international community. We hope that an end will soon be put to these acts.

The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/49/35) presents us with a comprehensive review of the tremendous work carried out by the United Nations system for the promotion of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine. In this regard, my delegation wishes to place on record its appreciation of the good work done by the Committee and the secretariat in the Division for Palestinian Rights.

My delegation shares the view of many others in this Hall that the international community should render more concerted support to the peace process, which has started moving in the right direction. The United Nations, whose purpose under the Charter is to maintain international peace and security and to promote development, should play a more active role in the Middle East peace process. We believe that a satisfactory final settlement to the question of Palestine must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), on the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 and on the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, primarily the right to self-determination.

For the cause of the Palestinian people to succeed, the United Nations organizations and agencies should provide that people with much-needed economic, technical, and development assistance. With regard to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, we believe it will make more efforts in the implementation of the mandate given it by the General Assembly in order to contribute to the realization of the common United Nations objective of achieving a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

In his message to the Secretary-General, to the Chairman of the Committee and to President Yasser Arafat yesterday, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the President of my country once again expressed the unswerving support of the Government and the people of Viet Nam for the just cause of the Palestinian people and the strong belief that, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Palestinian people will attain its final goal.

Mr. Ould Ely (Mauritania) (*interpretation from French*): Our debate on the question of Palestine takes place at a time when the Middle East peace process is entering a delicate phase in its implementation and when there are still sizeable obstacles to be overcome. Like the international community as a whole, Mauritania welcomed the dialogue initiated in Madrid, which to date has yielded positive results leading towards a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict. My country is resolute in its desire to support all efforts to make it possible to establish a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The question of Palestine is the very crux of the Israeli-Arab conflict, and it should remain at the centre

of United Nations concerns. It is important for the United Nations to be involved in all stages of the negotiations and to make a positive contribution to the solution of this thorny problem.

In this context, Mauritania welcomes the appointment last June of Ambassador Terje Rod Larsen as Special Coordinator in the occupied territories. Nevertheless, we believe that over and above programmes of economic, social and other types of assistance, the United Nations should be even more involved in all aspects of the process, where its great experience in the region may help to bring the parties concerned closer together.

In the current delicate phase of the Middle East peace process, it is essential that the international community remain active politically, economically and otherwise, in order to encourage the parties concerned to move ahead in their efforts and achieve this long-sought objective. As has been amply demonstrated by recent experience in South Africa, it is not enough for the parties concerned simply to agree to sit down at the negotiating table; they must also be inspired by the same genuine desire to live in a new climate of peace, and the international community must continue to support and encourage them.

For this reason we appreciate the very useful role played recently by the Security Council when it adopted resolution 904 (1994) after the tragic events that took place in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. While welcoming this very positive role, which contributed directly to the peace process, we believe that both the Security Council and the General Assembly should always ensure respect for the Charter of the United Nations, international law, international humanitarian law and the validity of the resolutions they have adopted in this area. In the same spirit, Israel should be encouraged to finally accept the *de jure* applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which is an indisputably important way of strengthening confidence between the sides.

The recent incidents in Gaza have shown how urgent it is to tackle squarely and resolutely the immense socio-economic problems that the Palestinian people continue to face. The commitments made at the pledging conference in Washington last year are taking some time to materialize on the ground, and this delay has undoubtedly made the peoples of the region even more impatient to enjoy the fruits of the long-awaited peace. The establishment of the autonomous Palestinian administration was a stirring sign of hope, which is why it is important to supply it promptly with the material and technical means required to meet expectations. For this reason, we regret that the Paris international conference planned for 9 September on assistance to the Palestinian Authority did not come about. We hope, none the less, that the international community will continue to provide economic and financial support to the new Palestinian administration.

The positive developments that have taken place in the process leading to a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian problem and, moreover, of the Arab-Israeli conflict, should not obscure the fact that the ultimate objective is the restoration of peace in the entire region. However significant these developments may be, they represent only the first stage in the transitional period, which should ultimately lead to the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from all occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, and the Palestinian people's exercise of its inalienable rights, including the right to establish its own State. As long as those objectives have not been achieved, the international community has the duty to be active and to continue to support the Palestinian people in its struggle, under the leadership of its legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), until its inalienable rights have been restored.

Mr. Graf zu Rantzau (Germany): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union, Austria and Finland.

Since 13 September last year it has been possible to speak for the first time in decades of a genuine chance to settle the question of Palestine, which is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The signing of the Declaration of Principles was welcomed throughout the world as a historic breakthrough towards solving one of the most intractable conflicts in our time.

It was a decision of great vision and courage when the leaders of both sides agreed to sit down and negotiate directly on how to settle this conflict. After decades of bitter enmity, they opened the door for reconciliation, not only between the Palestinians and the Israelis, but also between all the peoples of the region. This new prospect for peace and welfare must not be lost again. Despite all the progress made during the past year, the recent dramatic and painful events in Gaza have reminded us how dangerously volatile the situation remains. However, violence and terror must not get the upper hand again and destroy the hope for peace.

There is no alternative to the peace process. Those who try to derail it should look at the past and understand

that acts of terror will inevitably harm the interests of their own people and deprive yet another generation of a life in peace and prosperity. In a rapidly evolving world, neither the Israelis, the Palestinians nor anyone else in the region can afford to continue to spend so much energy and resources on a conflict which no one can win. Peace, prosperity and security in this tormented region can only be achieved if no party is excluded.

The European Union and its member States wish to contribute to the peace in the Middle East. They support the peace process politically, economically and financially. The European Union is the most important donor to the Palestinian territories. In 1993 it pledged 90 million ECU, and for the period from 1994 to 1998, the total is 500 million ECU. These funds are supposed to be used primarily for setting up the Palestinian Authority and for the improvement of the living conditions of the Palestinians. Within the framework of its Joint Action in Support of the Peace Process, the Union assists in setting up the Palestinian police force and in the preparation of the Palestinian elections. It has also declared its readiness to participate in the temporary international presence in the self-rule areas.

Improvements in the political sphere and the economic and social sphere go hand in hand; they are mutually reinforcing. Therefore, it is very important to build not only political, but also economic trust. We are convinced that at this stage in the establishment of Palestinian autonomy and its institutions it is of paramount importance that the people of the territories be made aware, in concrete terms, of the positive effects of the political changes which have been taking place for more than a year.

International aid can only be complementary to the efforts of the parties directly concerned. Therefore, the Palestinians and the Israelis should make every possible effort to enhance the effectiveness of those organizations and agencies dealing with the flow and management of financial assistance provided by donors. Furthermore, every step should be taken to ensure the speedy implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian economic agreement of 29 April 1994, which refers to the unimpeded access of Palestinian workers and products to Israel.

While the European Union reiterates its readiness and resolve to continue to contribute to the success of the peace process, it calls upon other donors, and especially those from the region itself, to carry their share of the international burden. We welcome the successful meeting on 28 November 1994 in Brussels between the European Union Ministerial Troika, the Foreign Minister of Israel and the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, which focused on a more rapid disbursement of aid.

The European Union will continue to play an active, constructive and balanced role in support of the peace process. It is firmly committed to contributing to the success of this process. To achieve this goal, the European Union will cooperate closely with the regional parties, the sponsors of the peace process and the participants in the relevant multilateral forums. The European Union continues to urge both sides to pursue their search for solutions to outstanding issues in the context of the bilateral and multilateral tracks and on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It urges both parties to respect the agreed timetables.

Mr. Villarroel (Philippines): The ongoing peace process between Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Arab countries continues to give rise to hopes for a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We are encouraged by the dramatic breakthroughs that have taken place since the process began in Madrid. We welcome the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Israel and Jordan three days ago. We hope that this positive development will spur efforts to further advance the peace negotiations among the parties concerned.

We are alarmed that despicable acts of violence have been committed to throw the process off track. But the courage and determination of the leaders of the region to confront the issue through peaceful dialogue have, fortunately, prevailed. Further acts of violence would only serve to prolong the agony and suffering of the Palestinian people.

The fates of the Arab and Israeli peoples are inextricably linked. Both peoples have made the momentous decision to try to tread the path to peace together. One cannot make it without the other as they undertake this difficult journey. It is therefore imperative that the parties concerned undertake meaningful confidence-building measures to create a climate of openness and mutual trust.

The Philippines is at one with the international community in its resolve to work relentlessly for the right of the Palestinian people to govern themselves and for the right of all States in the region to a secure existence

within internationally recognized boundaries. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of the interim self-governing Authority in Gaza and Jericho and look forward to the early realization of the second implementation agreement on elections.

We recognize that the road that lies ahead in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is fraught with uncertainties but that it is, on the other hand, also filled with infinite possibilities.

The development of the economic and social infrastructure in the occupied territories is vital in bringing about a qualitative improvement in the daily lives of the Palestinian people and in strengthening the foundation of their society. It is therefore essential that the international community continue to lend a helping hand in this regard.

We note the significant enlargement of the United Nations programmes of economic, social and other assistance to the occupied territories in support of the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and the promotion of peace in the region as a whole.

We look forward to more active United Nations participation in the multilateral negotiations on Middle East regional issues. We welcome the appointment of Ambassador Larsen of Norway as Special Coordinator in the occupied territories to facilitate effective coordination and intensification of United Nations assistance.

As we reaffirm our support for the ongoing peace process and the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements aimed at resolving the question of Palestine, which is the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, we look with anticipation to the early completion of the transition process towards the establishment of a fully independent Palestinian State.

It is our hope that a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of this conflict between and among the parties in the region will finally lead to peace, reconciliation and harmony among all the descendants of Abraham.

Mr. Ayewah (Nigeria): The delegation of Nigeria wishes to point, with a sense of vindication and accomplishment, to the fruits of the optimism it so strongly advocated during the deliberations on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Nigeria remains fully convinced that the unfolding positive developments in the Middle East peace process are the inevitable fruit of the realism exhibited by all the parties concerned. That spirit has indeed been motivated by the radical realignment of approach in our deliberations on the issues at hand, as well as by a new sense of moderation and compromise.

My delegation notes the positive developments in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process that have resulted, *inter alia*, in the signing on 4 May 1994 at Cairo of the first implementation agreement of the Declaration of Principles - namely, the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area. We also welcome other agreements that were reached regarding Palestinian self- determination and, in particular, the recent declaration of intention to negotiate the second implementation agreement, on the elections.

Today, as we applaud the progress in the various facets and stages of the negotiations leading to the complete autonomy of Palestine, the historic agreement between Israel and Jordan and the slowly unfolding progress towards direct discussions between Israel and Syria, we are convinced of the existence of the requisite political will on the part of the international community to achieve a final settlement and a comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

We are, of course, deeply concerned by the serious impediments in the form of violent opposition to the peace process. Although this opposition stems from frustrations caused by decades of repressive occupation and gross violations of human rights, we think it is not insurmountable. In this respect, the measures stipulated in Security Council resolution 904 (1994), some of which are currently being implemented, need to be enhanced.

My delegation's position on developments in the Middle East is comPletely compatible with the views contained in the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We also share the confidence of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories that the early transfer of responsibilities to the Palestinians in the fields of education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism will bring about an immediate improvement in the daily lives of the population of the occupied territories. The determination, wisdom and spirit of understanding which led to the signing of the Declaration of Principles and the Cairo Agreement must be translated into reality through compliance with all universally accepted standards of international

humanitarian and human-rights law. My delegation also hopes that important issues, such as those relating to settlements, the abuses committed by settlers, the release of prisoners and the indiscriminate imposition of collective punishments, will be given urgent and careful consideration to ensure that the momentum generated by the signing of the historic agreements is not lost. We believe that a positive approach in this area could further strengthen the peace process and enable all the people in the region to live in harmony, dignity and peace.

My delegation acknowledges the very constructive deliberations in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, particularly the enormous resources placed at the disposal of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in the Near East (UNRWA) in order to undertake the additional role of providing socio-economic structures in the territories under the peace implementation programme. In this connection, my delegation calls on the international community to increase its support for the activities of UNRWA in order to enable the Agency to carry out its mandate effectively. In the same vein, we would like to urge full compliance by Member States with all the resolutions relevant to the question of the occupied territories adopted by the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights, as well as by agencies of the United Nations system such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

My delegation also agrees fully with the recommendation that an end be put to all measures that adversely affect the economic and social situation of the populations of the occupied territories. In this connection, the importance of the full enjoyment of basic rights and fundamental freedom must be underscored. The imposition of curfews, the destruction of property, and discriminatory measures concerning the use of water resources can only prevent attainment of the desired goal.

As despair regarding the Middle East crisis continues to give way to concrete achievements, our deliberations should continue to be devoid of acrimony and blind disagreement. Let the language and content of any decision we take on the items under consideration be in consonance with the achievements on the ground. In that way we shall be making a contribution to the final solution to the crisis.

As a firm believer in the right of all peoples to self-determination and as a long-time member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, Nigeria has total faith in this approach.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.